

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1658

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUCHAREST 0515

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: CPAS, OEXC, RO (VROMAN, ROBERT)

SUBJ: PROTECTION AND WELFARE - VROMAN, ROBERT

REF: (A) BUCHAREST 0395; (B) BUCHAREST 5816; (C) STATE 24329

1. ON FEBRUARY 5 EMBOFF CONTACTED DIRECTORS ILLESCU AND CHIRITESCU IN PROTOCOL DIVISION OF MINISTRY OF JUSTICE AND PERSONALLY HANDED THEM A NOTE CONCERNING THE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS TO BE INITIATED AGAINST AMCIT AND FORMER EXCHANGE PROGRAM PARTICIPANT ROBERT VROMAN ON FEBRUARY 6, 1975.

2. THE NOTE, COPY OF WHICH WAS SENT TO ROMANIAN MFA, CONTAINED THE FOLLOWING:

A) A REQUEST FOR CLARIFICATION OF THE CHARGES OF ESPIONAGE AND TRANSMISSION OF STATE SECRETS MADE AGAINST VROMAN (ART. 157 AND 159 OF THE ROMANIAN PENAL CODE).

B) A REQUEST, AT VROMAN'S BEHEST, FOR A DELAY IN TRIAL UNTIL HE KNOWS THE DETAILS OF THE CHARGES, AND CAN PREPARE A DEFENSE.

3. IN HIS ORAL PRESENTATION EMBOFF OBSERVED VROMAN WAS FORMER EXCHANGE PROFESSOR WHO SPENT TWO YEARS (1972-1974) AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CLUJ, AND WHO NOW TEACHES LINGUISTICS
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AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON IN SEATTLE. VROMAN

CONTINUES TO HAVE CLOSE PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH ROMANIA BECAUSE OF HIS ACADEMIC WORK, AND IS ANXIOUS TO KNOW THE PRECISE NATURE OF CHARGES AGAINST HIM. JUSTICE DIRECTORS WERE TOLD VROMAN HAD ALSO CONTACTED THE ROMANIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON TO SEEK A CLARIFICATION OF SUMMONS.

4. EMBOFF SAID POTENTIAL SERIOUSNESS OF THE CHARGES CANNOT BE OVERLOOKED SINCE VROMAN HAD PARTICIPATED IN THE JOINT ROMANIAN-US CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM FOR TWO YEARS. HE ALSO INDICATED IT WAS IN MUTUAL INTEREST OF BOTH GOVERNMENTS THAT DETAILS OF CHARGES AGAINST FORMER GRANTEE BE CLARIFIED PROMPTLY.

5. FINALLY, EMBOFF REQUESTED PERMISSION TO ATTEND OPENING OF TRIAL AT THE MILITARY TRIBUNAL OF BUCHAREST, SCHEDULED TO START FEBRUARY 6, IF TRIAL NOT POSTPONED.

6. JUSTICE DIRECTORS PROMISED TO LOOK INTO MATTER, AND CONTACT EMBASSY LATER IN DAY ON FEBRUARY 5. IN AFTERNOON, DIRECTOR CHIRITESCU CONTACTED EMBASSY OFFICER AND INFORMED HIM:

A) GIVEN "SECRET CHARACTER" OF CHARGES, THEIR SPECIFIC NATURE COULD NOT BE REVEALED.

B) PERMISSION REQUESTED TO ATTEND OPENING OF TRIAL WAS DENIED BECAUSE OF SENSITIVE NATURE OF THE INFORMATION TO BE EXAMINED.

C) IF VROMAN WAS UNABLE TO ATTEND TRIAL PERSONALLY, HE COULD SUBMIT A MEMORIAL IN HIS DEFENSE DIRECTLY TO THE TRIBUNAL, OR THROUGH THE ROMANIAN EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON. HE COULD ALSO HIRE A LAWYER TO DEFEND HIM DURING THE PROCEEDINGS. EMBOFF POINTED OUT TO CHIRITESCU THAT VROMAN CLAIMED TO BE UNAWARE OF THE ACCUSATIONS LEVELED AGAINST HIM, AND IT WOULD BE ABSURD FOR HIM TO PREPARE A DEFENSE WITHOUT KNOWING WHAT THE CHARGES WERE.

D) THE TRIAL WOULD START ON SCHEDULE BUT VROMAN WOULD HAVE TIME TO PREPARE A DEFENSE BEFORE A JUDGEMENT WAS REACHED. NO PRECISE TIME-FRAME FOR THE TRIAL WAS GIVEN HOWEVER.

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7. DIRECTOR CHIRITESCU ADDED RATHER SHEEPISHLY THAT HE "COULD NOT PENETRATE THE MILITARY TRIBUNAL", AND REGRETTED HE COULD NOT BE MORE FORTHCOMING IN HIS REPLY. HE ALSO REITERATED HIS BELIEF THAT VROMAN WAS "NO DOUBT, ALREADY AWARE OF THE NATURE OF THE CHARGES AGAINST HIM".

8. ACTION REQUESTED: THAT VROMAN BE INFORMED OF THE INQUIRIES MADE ON HIS BEHALF TO POSTPONE HIS TRIAL AND BE

REQUESTED TO TAKE NO FURTHER STEPS AT THIS TIME PENDING
FURTHER GUIDANCE FROM EMBASSY.

9. COMMENT: THE IMPLICATIONS IN THIS CASE ARE SERIOUS.
AUSTRIAN CITIZEN MAUSCHITZ (SEE REFTEL B) WAS TRIED AND
CONVICTED IN SAME JURISDICTION UNDER THE SAME ART. OF THE
ROMANIAN PENAL CODE. MAUSCHITZ WAS ONLY RELEASED BY
ROMANIAN AUTHORITIES AFTER THE PAYMENT OF QUARTER OF A
MILLION DOLLAR FINE. WHILE VROMAN IS NOT PHYSICALLY IN
ROMANIA AT PRESENT TIME, IF FOUND GUILTY HIS SENTENCING
BY THE MILITARY TRIBUNAL WILL PRESUMABLY PREVENT HIM FROM
RETURNING TO ROMANIA WHERE HE HAS DONE MUCH OF HIS PRO-
FESSIONAL RESEARCH. FURTHERMORE, GOR MOTIVES FOR PRESSING
SUCH CHARGES AGAINST FORMER US GRANTEE ARE NOT CLEAR, AND
EMBASSY BELIEVES IT IMPORTANT THAT THE BE CLARIFIED.

10. DCM MEETING SEPARATELY WITH MFA DIRECTOR OF THIRD
DIRECTORATE, CONSTANTIN OANCEA, AND DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF
CONSULAR DIRECTORATE, ANDREI GOICEA, ON MORNING OF FEBRUARY
7 TO SEEK CLARIFICATION OF CHARGES. DCM INTENDS STRESS
THAT NATURE OF CASE AND GOR REFUSAL TO DATE TO CLARIFY
CHARGES INEVITABLY ADDS POLITICAL DIMENSION TO MATTER.
WILL STATE THAT THIS IS FIRST TIME AMCIT HAS SPECIFICALLY
BEEN CHARGED WITH SUCH CRIMES (AT LEAST WITHIN OUR INSTI-
TUTIONAL MEMORY). WILL ALSO NOTE IN PARTICULARLY UNFOR-
TUNATE THAT CHARGES HAVE BEEN LODGED AGAINST FORMER MEMBER
OF EXCHANGE PROGRAM IN VIEW OF RECENT SIGNING OF NEW
CULTURAL ACCORD BETWEEN GOR AND USG. WILL CONCLUDE BY
EXPRESSING SERIOUS CONCERN THAT POSSIBILITY OF PUBLICITY
IN US OF VROMAN'S TRIAL AND SUBSEQUENT SENTENCING IN
ABSENTIA NOT ONLY WILL CREATE UNWANTED POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES
BUT WILL ALSO CREATE PROBLEMS IN RECRUITING US PARTICIPANTS
IN NEXT YEAR'S CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM.
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11. WILL PROMPTLY REPORT RESULTS OF THESE MEETINGS.
MEANWHILE RECOMMEND DEPARTMENT BACK UP THESE EFFORTS BY
MAKING VIGOROUS ORAL DEMARCHE TO ROMANIAN EMBASSY ALONG
SAME LINES.
BARNES

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